

Application No. 09/804,287
Amendment Dated May 11, 2004
Reply to Office Action of March 23, 2004

Remarks

This Amendment is responsive to the Office Action mailed on March 23, 2004 and to the Advisory Action mailed May 4, 2004 in connection with the above-identified patent application. In the Office Action, claims 1-20 were allowed and claims 21-29 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over U.S. Patent No. 4,145,612 to Cooper in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,628,853 to Edwards, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 4,828,208 to Peterson. That Action was made final.

In the rejection of claims 21-29 over Cooper in view of Edwards and further in view of Peterson, the Examiner took the position that Cooper discloses a medical appliance interface comprising a table top having a substantially flat upper surface, a substantially flat lower surface, and a substantially flat side surface extending between the upper edge of the table top and the lower edge of the table top. However, the Examiner noted that the difference between claim 21 and Cooper is that the claim recites a groove defined by the upper surface, the groove being spaced from the upper edge of the table top defined by the upper surface, and a ridge defined by the lower surface, the ridge being disposed at a lower edge of the table top defined by the lower surface. The Examiner then applied the Edwards '853 patent to teach a table top having a groove 12 defined by an upper surface 2, the groove being spaced from an upper edge of the table top. According to the Examiner, one would have been motivated to modify the table top of Cooper to have a groove, as in Edwards, because the ability to provide a spill groove would have been achieved. The Examiner further applied the Peterson '208 patent which, according to the Examiner, teaches a ridge 197 defined by a

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lower surface of the table, the ridge being disposed at a lower edge of the table top. According to the Examiner, it would have been obvious to one of ordinary skill in the art having the Cooper and Peterson disclosures to modify the table of Cooper to have a ridge, as in Peterson, to provide the ability to facilitate grasping the table top.

Response to Examiner's Comments:

On page 5 of the Office Action, the Examiner took the position that claims 1-20 recite that the support structures perform the function of creating forces on an associate medical appliance/device. However, according to the Examiner, claims 21-29 do not disclose that any medical appliance/device is supported by the claimed structural elements, and so the recitation of "a medical appliance interface" holds little patentable weight.

In response to the Examiner's position noted above, applicants respectfully tender an amendment to independent claim 21 above. Applicants have amended that claim to clearly point out that an associated medical appliance is supportable by the claimed structural elements of the appliance interface, particularly, by the surfaces defined by the interface. These surfaces include the upper, lower, and side surfaces of the table top together with the ridge and groove provided thereon.

It is to be noted that independent claim 1 stands allowed and is directed to a medical appliance support interface for selectively connecting an associated medical appliance to a patient support table, the support table including substantially planar top and bottom surfaces held apart in an opposed relationship. In view of this, it is respectfully submitted that the amendments tendered to

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independent claim 21 above were previously considered by the Examiner during examination of at least claim 1. Other allowed claims in this application have similar language.

It is further respectfully submitted that no new matter has been added and that further search and/or consideration will not be required on the Examiner's end. More particularly, it is respectfully submitted that the amendments to independent claim 21 merely further reinforce the environment of the claimed medical appliance interface and that the interface includes upper, lower, and side surfaces adapted to create forces to support an associated medical appliance relative to a patient support table.

Again, the Examiner has already searched this art and has considered claims having similar limitations and, accordingly, no further search and/or consideration will be required.

Examiner Interview

In the event that the above amendment and comments presented in support thereof does not place claims 21-29 in condition for allowance, applicants respectfully request a telephonic interview to be conducted between the Examiner and applicants' representative identified below. This request for an interview is for purposes of advancing prosecution in this matter.

Claims 1-20 stand allowed.

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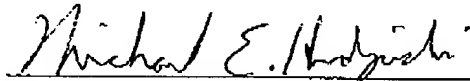
CONCLUSION

In view of the above amendments, comments, and arguments presented, it is respectfully submitted that all pending claims are patentably distinct and unobvious over the references of record.

Allowance of all claims and early notice to that effect is respectfully requested.

Respectfully submitted,

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